



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

P.S. 117 J. Keld/Briarwood School

Elementary School Q117

**85-15 143 Street
Queens
NY 11435**

Principal: Paula Cunningham

**Date of review: May 11, 2016
Lead Reviewer: Joan Prince**

The School Context

P.S. 117 J. Keld/Briarwood School is an elementary school with 1,081 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 37% Asian, 10% Black, 33% Hispanic, and 16% White students. The student body includes 9% English Language Learners and 15% students with disabilities. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 93.4%.

School Quality Criteria

Instructional Core		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
1.1 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards	Additional Findings	Well Developed
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the instructional shifts and Danielson <i>Framework for Teaching</i> , aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products	Focus	Proficient
2.2 Align assessments to curricula, use on-going assessment and grading practices, and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom levels	Additional Findings	Well Developed
School Culture		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations	Celebration	Well Developed
Systems for Improvement		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning	Additional Findings	Well Developed

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
---------------------------	------------------------------	----------------	-----------------------

Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations for professionalism and instruction to the entire staff aligned with elements of the *Danielson* Framework for Teaching and partner with families to support student progress.

Impact

Structures and training that support the school's high expectations build accountability among staff, students, and parents that provide a clear path to understanding expectations and increased student achievement toward college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- The administration, faculty and staff accept responsibility for and have a mutual collective understanding of doing what is necessary to meet the high expectations of the entire school. Danielson's *Framework for Teaching* provides meaningful feedback to teachers based upon formal and informal visits and observations as evidenced by documents reviewed. There are focused trainings on the domains at teacher team meetings and school-wide professional development. Curriculum resources, assessment data and grade specific portfolios are maintained to provide a unified system connected to college and career readiness. Administrative walkthroughs are conducted with a specific focus with immediate feedback and time bound next steps for improved teaching practices. Parent workshops in all curricula areas throughout the year are given by teachers at different times of the day to accommodate schedules and further family partnerships to support students' progress. There are Learning Walks with parents to monitor progress.
- There exists a strong relationship between families and the school community, starting when new students enter and continuing through the end of the school year. Many teachers and paraprofessionals provide parents with cell phone numbers to communicate regularly. There is a Home School Connection Curriculum Newsletter to inform parents about current units of study and offer practical ways families can support children at home. Teacher's emails are available along with simple assignments to support their children at home. Teachers stated that they are happy to have opportunities to share their expertise and best practices with their colleagues and with parents thereby, providing a culture of high expectations. The school uses the Positive Behavior Intervention System (PBIS) and Cooperation Accountability Respect (Keep your CAR on track) to foster student self-esteem. A student government organization assisted in creating after school activities such as the Mighty Milers, and a broadcasting club using live broadcasting to promote positive student behaviors and high expectations.
- School leaders effectively communicate the expectations connected to a path for college and career readiness through teachers and external partners to give relevant information. There are college event days that include parent participation. Parents spoke of the HS Heroes program where high school students come with lessons and teach classes. Through the Junior Achievement program students discuss the college experience to reinforce college awareness and careers. With parents having the tools to monitor and support their children, high expectations are supported, embraced and reinforced by all.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient
---------------------------	---------------------	----------------	-------------------

Findings

Across classrooms teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and the Danielson *Framework For Teaching*, and reflect a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best. Teaching strategies, extensions and multiple entry points vary across the grades in engaging English Language learners and students with disabilities.

Impact

The challenging tasks and supports that are provided to all learners, including students with disabilities and English Language Learners, enable students to demonstrate higher-order thinking in their work in most but not all classes.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms teachers provide small group instruction. In some classes, students participated in discussions by responding to teacher-generated questions. In-depth analysis and peer-to-peer interaction was required of all students. Higher-level thinking by students with disabilities, struggling learners, and ELLs was in evidence. Purposeful class groupings and scaffolding, to provide multiple entry points, was in evidence across classrooms. Students worked in groups in a Grade 5 English Language Arts class and used text-based evidence as they discussed characters while working on memoirs. In a grade 1 class the students were comparing and contrasting the process they used to attain the correct answer for a measurement problem in math. Different groups were using straws and links to visually help them understand the concept and help their thinking. Student pairs were asked to share the process they created. A Grade 3 English Language Arts class was reviewing setting and how it affects the subject's life. The students had different articles that they were to use to complete the task.
- Teaching strategies in most classes visited provided scaffolding and multiple entry points. In many classes connections to the real world, by explicitly connecting concepts to everyday experiences, encouraged inquiry. Students at the student meeting expressed they are comfortable discussing their thoughts on a subject and feel challenged to expand their thinking. It was evident in many classrooms that teachers plan differentiated activities ensuring access to the curricula for all students.
- Following the gradual release model in the school, students were in many instances serving as the leader and answering student questions instead of the teacher. However, this did not occur in a majority of the classes visited. In some classes teachers asked open-ended questions to push student thinking and give students an opportunity to deepen their thinking by questioning each other during think/pair/share, as well as in whole class discussions. Students shared explanations using reason and evidence based on prior knowledge or real life situations. When teacher interaction occurred there was reframing and redirecting the questions to other students to increase engagement. Teachers are focused on aligning advanced instructional strategies to complement the rigor of the curriculum. However, the academic tasks vary in opportunities for student choice and extension for higher-performing students, limiting accelerated learning for all students.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Well Developed
---------------------------	-----------------------	----------------	-----------------------

Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms, assessments and rubrics utilized are aligned to the school's curricula and clearly highlight student progress toward mastery. Teachers' assessment practices consistently reflect the varied use of ongoing checks for understanding.

Impact

Assessment practices inform students of their next learning steps and allow teachers to track student progress. Teacher practice consistently reflects checks for understanding and student self-assessment leading to effective lesson adjustment for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- All teachers monitor progress through data analysis of formative and summative assessments, using this information to provide meaningful feedback to students and to guide adjustments to units and lessons. School leaders developed a school-wide assessment plan which included teacher self and peer reflection, setting instructional learning, using Professional Learning Communities for instructional and programmatic improvements. Teachers adjust curricula based on diagnostics of incoming students and informal assessments. Assessment analysis has resulted in teachers creating student writing and math checklists so that students engage in peer and self-assessment on a regular basis. Exit slips and task specific rubrics are a school wide practice and evidenced during classes visited. Every lesson plan is embedded with assessment. End of unit assessments give teachers formative data they use to adjust instruction and change the emphasis of an upcoming unit if needed. Students in a grade 1 class were using tiles as thinking prompts to reach outcomes on nonstandard measurement. Students were able to self-assess and develop next steps.
- Teachers College reading assessments and running records are used to measure students' independent reading levels. Kindergarten students are assessed on concepts of print and high frequency words. This has provided the teachers with formative and summative data to further their planning and instruction. The *GO Math!* program is used for problem solving and assessment of mathematical strategies. In all classrooms, conference notes, checklists and rubrics are embedded in reading, writing and math instruction. There are social studies culminating tasks for each unit with areas for student choice. Exit slips and quick writes are used as checks for understanding. Peer assessment is used as a means for students to better their work products and provide next steps for each other.
- In math, teachers worked with groups of students to have them understand different problem solving strategies. In a kindergarten class, students were working at their own level, giving answers using phonemic sounds and using charts as a reference. There was practice around sound coordination and clues with hand movements to identify connections to words for understanding. Teachers use formal and informal assessments to adjust lessons. Teachers adjust curricula through analyzing pre-test and state test data using itemized analysis to highlight the lowest standard in each grade.

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Well Developed
---------------------------	-----------------------	----------------	-----------------------

Findings

All curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and integrate the instructional shifts. Higher order thinking skills are consistently emphasized for all learners across the grades and content areas promoting college and career readiness for all students.

Impact

Curricular decisions build coherence and rigorous habits for all learners, including students with disabilities and English Language Learners. Across grades and content areas, academic tasks push student thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- Curricula maps provide evidence of rigorous academic tasks aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and informed by the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* through the adaption of the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project. In addition, supplemental programs and materials, to better meet the needs of the various student populations, are being incorporated. *Foundations*, *GOMath!*, *myON Reader*, *Mathletics*, *Study Island*, *Engage NY* and *Southern Cross* are examples of the programs that are used. The Full Option Science System (FOSS) kits are used with New York State K-5 Science Scope & Sequence, while the New York State Social Studies framework is used for social studies. Teachers utilize the (ORID) protocol: Objective Level, Reflective Level, Interpretive Level, Decisional Level, as instructional support along with close reading strategies.
- An examination of unit plans indicates they meet the needs of individual students, and contain rigorous content, promote critical thinking and problem solving skills. An English as a second language component is embedded into plans so that English Language Learners must demonstrate their thinking. The integration of the instructional shifts, including college and career readiness, sourcing informational text and *myON*, an on-line reading resource in the classroom and for home are embedded across curricula. Adjustments to materials used for instruction in order to promote cohesiveness across grades are evidenced in lesson plans and curriculum maps. Cross-curriculum projects ensure that students experience learning through specific domain texts not only in ELA but also in Science and Social Studies.
- Unit plans in all content areas illustrated multiple designs of academic tasks with numerous scaffolds and entry points and extensions for the advanced learners. Examples include, a progression of literacy skills that begin with students expressing their opinion of stories in kindergarten *and* continue to progress in first and second grade to writing their opinion and then transitioning to argumentative and persuasive essays in upper grades. Students are asked to self-reflect using subject-area rubrics and feedback protocols are used across classrooms. Focus on differentiation and multiple entry points to challenge students to think critically is supported by teacher leaders who are assessing and refining the curriculum maps to promote higher-order thinking skills. The school has a partnership with City Lore and participates in Junior Achievement, High School Heroes, and partnerships with banking organizations. Volunteers in the classrooms increase the awareness of careers and the requirements of going to college.

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Well Developed
---------------------------	---	----------------	-----------------------

Findings

The vast majority of teachers are engaged in inquiry based structured professional collaborations that systemically analyze key elements of teacher work including classroom practice, assessment data and student work.

Impact

The work of teacher teams has resulted in school-wide instructional coherence, improved pedagogy, and has strengthened teacher instructional capacity. Leadership structures provide a means for teachers to have input on key decisions about curricula and practice.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers meet multiple times a week to discuss and refine curricula. Teachers have common preps by grade. Teachers developed a structure whereby they choose seven students from each class, the Super Seven, and try new pedagogical strategies. These students become their study groups for 4 to 6 weeks and at the end of that time teachers share outcomes with their peers. Teacher teams are used to discuss practice and make timely adjustment to instruction. There is extensive collaboration and teachers meet to analyze different types of data and student work. The ORID protocol is utilized and the “Super Seven” students are the focus of the team’s work. Teams work together, and often share out with the entire staff. They have created videos and power points at the conclusion of learning cycles. Teacher teams look at student work and content goals focusing on what they need to know, be able to do and be able to explain to highlight student needs and inform teacher practice. Teacher leaders from upper and lower grades, academic specialists, special education and cluster teachers along with administrators set school goals and professional learning cycles.
- Teachers are given the opportunity to schedule and observe the practice of a peer through inter-visitation and through a “Collaborative Teachers Instructional Learning Walk.” Roles are assigned allowing teachers to engage in and make school-wide instructional decisions. Lead teachers facilitate professional learning workshops and ensure that teacher teams use protocols in order for all members to participate. Teachers go to outside venues for workshops and subsequently turnkey training to the school staff. Two teachers from each content area meet with the administration and together brainstorm next steps for instruction. Leadership roles are on every grade level and within this framework are given autonomy. This structure promotes teacher leadership and decision making capacity to plan academic tasks that improve classroom instruction and increase student achievement.
- Shared leadership focused on improved student outcomes are seen in agendas and goals resulting in school-wide instructional coherence. Teachers conduct professional development sessions, mentor, and coach across all grades and content areas in the school. At the grade 3 team meeting, teachers analyzed student responses from an on demand-writing task. It was determined that the use of charts to help with proper punctuation and quotation marks when using dialogue would be the next step to support students. Team meetings are yielding increased student outcomes for all learners, as evidenced in student work as well as recent data from schoolwide math and literacy assessments.